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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 001335

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARP

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [BU](#) [IZ](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQ: BULGARIA SEEKING TO SUPPORT RECONSTRUCTION

Classified By: DCM Frank C. Urbanic for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (U) This is an action request. Please see para 6.

2. (C) Summary. The Government of Bulgaria is seeking ways to support efforts by the DoD Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance in the reconstruction and civil administration of Iraq according to Bulgarian Ambassador to Kuwait Angel Mantchev. Mantchev met with ORHA Baghdad Regional Coordinator Ambassador Barbara Bodine on April 8 to inquire how Bulgaria could support ORHA's mission. Ambassador Bodine outlined ORHA's work, stressing that Bulgaria's long history of political and commercial contacts with Iraq could prove invaluable. In response to Ambassador Bodine's questions, Mantchev said Bulgaria had particular experience in highway construction and agriculture in Iraq; could grant access to Embassy personnel recently evacuated from Baghdad; and might be able to assign detailees to ORHA to work as advisors in Iraqi ministries. He added that the Ministry of Economy has formed a working group to consider other ways for the GOB to participate. End Summary.

3. (C) Mantchev opened the meeting noting that his government had instructed him to make contact with ORHA to find out how Bulgaria could support the reconstruction and civil administration aspects of ORHA's mission. Ambassador agreed that support for ORHA was an excellent opportunity for Bulgaria to participate in the coalition. She added that Bulgaria, alongside other Eastern European countries, could potentially make a unique contribution to the reconstruction of Iraq since they had recently made the successful transition from totalitarian to democratic systems.

4. (C) Civil Administration. Mantchev said the GOB was especially interested in helping with civil administration in Iraq. He said that, as an initial step, the seven Embassy personnel the GOB had evacuated from Baghdad to Sofia and Damascus could meet with U.S. Embassy personnel to discuss their experiences. Ambassador Bodine said we would be interested in learning about their work with Iraqi ministries, especially their view of the prominent--and not so prominent--people at each ministry that ORHA could turn to in helping to get the ministries operating again, and any information on how the ministries functioned. (Action request for Sofia and Damascus: would appreciate your approaching the GOB and Bulgarian Embassy Damascus to arrange to meet these former Embassy officers.)

5. (C) Reconstruction and Humanitarian Relief. Mantchev said that Bulgarian companies and subcontractors have significant experience in Iraq dating back to the 1970's and 80's. He noted that the Nasariyah-Hillah highway had been built by a Bulgarian firm and that agribusiness companies had also been active there. Bulgaria had also trained Iraqis in many fields, Bulgarians who had married Iraqi students and were now living in Iraq. In the field of humanitarian relief, Mantchev said that Bulgaria might be able to send bottled water.

6. (C) Liaison and Personnel. Ambassador Bodine gently dissuaded Mantchev when he offered to send Bulgarian liaison personnel to ORHA. Instead, she suggested that Bulgaria should move, as soon as it was safe, to reopen its mission in Baghdad as a Liaison Office. The office could maintain contacts with both ORHA and the Iraqi Interim Authority (IAA). If the GOB wished to contribute personnel to ORHA, the best way would be to send them as detailees to serve as sub-ministerial advisors; the GOB should consider sub-areas at the division or bureau level within ministries in which it had the personnel/expertise to contribute. In addition, Bulgaria could send an aid official to the